

## The Election and Installation of Tungku Muhammad, C.M.G.

### Bin Tungku Antah, as the Yang Di Per Tuan Besar, Negri Sembilan

BY E. W. BIRCH

I have been induced to publish the story of how the ancient constitution of the Negri Sembilan was restored. It will be conceded that it is easier to overthrow than re-establish the constitution of a country. The event I am about to describe being one of very deep importance to the Chief and people of the beautiful State that lies between Malacca and Selangor. A brief reference to the history of the Nine States and to the establishment of the dynasty, represented by Tungku Muhammad, is first necessary.

No dates have been handed down to define the time at which the descent of a great number of Sakai from the hills peopled the countries of (1) Klang (now Selangor), (2) Naning (now a portion of Malacca), (3) Jelai (now a district of Pahang), (4) Segamat, and (5) Pasir Besar (now included in the State and Territory of Johor), (6) Johol, (7) Sungei Ujong, (8) Rembau, and (9) Jelebu.

Four Batin, or Sakai Chiefs, were the leaders of this colonisation: one, a woman, remained with her following in Johol: the other three, with their adherents, occupied Klang, Sungei Ujong and Jelebu.

These four Lawgivers (undang yang ampat) are repeatedly referred to hereafter, but it should here be stated that the state of Rembau has succeeded to the position formerly held by Klang.

As time rolled on other people were attracted to these countries and there was free immigration from Menangkabau. The new arrivals brought their tribal customs with them, and, as the terms "Waris" and "Lembaga" will recur, it will be well to point out that there is only one Sakai, or Waris, tribe—viz., the "Suku Beduanda"—while there are several Menangkabau tribes, the elected head of each being known as the Lembaga or manager of the tribal system.

The Sakai and the people from Menangkabau maintained the most friendly relations, but it became evident that over the Nine States there must be some Suzerain to whom inter-state disputes could be submitted for adjudication: and, through the good offices of the Ruler of Johor, a deputation to Menangkabau was arranged and a Prince of that royal family was induced to come over.

In the year 1773, or thereabout, Raja Mélêwar was installed by the four Lawgivers as Yang di per Tuan Besar, and he took the title, by which he and all his successors have been known, of Yam Tuan Besar, Sri Menanti. That beautiful valley which it is impossible to traverse without halting repeatedly to feast one's eyes on the scenery of hills, green or golden padi, and feathery bamboos had already been occupied by Menangkabau settlers, and they had so named it because, on their arrival, they found padi in the ear, ripe, awaiting them. There the Astana was built and the site then selected has become the ancestral home of the Raja.

Meanwhile other districts had been opened by settlers. The gaps, caused by the defection or alienation of five of the original Nine States, were filled by Ulu Muar, Terâchi, Jempol, Gunong Pasir, and Inas. Subsequently Tampin and Gemencheh, settlements from Rembau and Johol, were added.

Gradually the constitution was built up and strengthened, but, about thirty years ago, dissensions, inevitable in all histories, arose, and Rembau, Jelebu and Sungai Ujong were estranged.

Then the healing interference of Great Britain commenced: by degrees Sungai Ujong (April, 1874), Rembau (March, 1884),

Jelebu (September, 1886), and Sri Menanti (June, 1887), were brought under British Protection.

Finally, by the agreement of August, 1895, the Confederation of all the States, with one British Resident as Adviser to the Chiefs, was arranged.

Such was the condition of affairs when I assumed my duties as British Resident early in 1897. Apparently everything was in order, but enquiry proved that in matters relating to the constitution and Malay customs the greatest disorder prevailed. The Yam Tuan of Sri Menanti had not been installed: he had merely been declared to be Yam Tuan by British authority in June, 1887: there had been no formal creation of a Yam Tuan since the installation of Tungku Antah his father, and even then the Rembau and Jelebu Chiefs had not attended: of the four Lawgivers, Johol alone admitted allegiance to the Yam Tuan: the other three declared that they were absolutely independent and that their independence had been recognised by the wording of the agreement of August, 1895.

The secret of success with Malays consists, to a great extent, in the recognition of the fact that the mainspring of their life, political and social, is built upon the word "adat." Their customs are their inheritance: they regard them as their birthright and they are an absolutely conservative people. I hope that it is not unfair to say that some English administrators, who have been very popular with Malays, have fallen into the error of pandering to the Malay veneration for custom. They have put off reforms forgetting as it were that many Malays possess that true conservatism which while tenacious of the constitution, is ready to accept useful measures of reform.

My experience had taught me that the Malay is a very reasonable person, and the Malays of Malacca and of the Negri Sembilan at all events have in a comparatively short space of time consented to the demolition of their ancient but obsolete land customs. It was not without a considerable show of opposition that their consent to that demolition was

obtained but knowing that they will generally yield to the arguments of them whom they trust I was hopeful that though at the sacrifice of their self-importance, they would agree to re-establish their ancient constitution.

The opportunity arose in this wise:—When the Hari Raya, or festival which succeeds the month of fasting, was approaching, the Yam Tuan invited the four Lawgivers to Sri Menanti to witness the ceremony of obeisance which is annually performed by the subjects of a Malay Raja.

They (Johol excepted) declined the invitation and made all manner of excuses, their only reasonable plea being that it was customary to receive the homage of their own subjects on the Hari Raya.

The Yam Tuan then arranged to invite them immediately after the festival of the Hari Raya Haji, and I asked them to attend. They urged that there was no reason why they should go, and expressed fears that their attendance might be construed to be a waiver of the freedom from interference which they then enjoyed in the internal affairs of their respective States.

I invited them to a meeting at the Residency and explained that they were placing a strained construction upon the words of the agreement, that the British Government had never intended that they were to repudiate the Raja who was the representative of the dynasty their own ancestors had set up, that they were trying to override ancient custom by arguing on customs of thirty years' growth and that the machinery of the Negri Sembilan Government could not work until its component parts were replaced in their constituted places.

They replied that ancient custom required that they should instal the Yam Tuan, that Tungku Muhammad had not been invested with the powers and position of Yang di per Tuan Besar by them, and that they would be stultifying themselves if they went to Sri Menanti.

After a hasty meeting with the Yam Tuan, who at once agreed to be formally proclaimed, I suggested to the three

malcontent Lawgivers that they should draft an agreement in Malay setting forth their allegiance but providing for freedom from interference in internal affairs and for permission to celebrate the Hari Raya in their own States.

That agreement, when drafted, was submitted to and approved of by the Yam Tuan.

Translated it reads as follows:—

**AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE YANG DI PER TUAN BESAR, SRI MENANTI, AND THE FOUR LAWGIVERS.**

Now in all truth We, the Yang di per Tuan Muhammad, C. M. G., the son of the late Yang di per Tuan, Antah, have made an Agreement with the Four Lawgivers.

- I. The Dato' Klana Petra and the Dato' Bandar of Sungei Ujong.
- II. The Dato' Mendika Mentri Akhir Zaman Sutan of Jelebu :
- III. The Dato' Johan Pahlawan Lela Perkasa Setiawan of Johol :
- IV. The Dato' Sedia Raja of Rembau.

1. Whereas We and the Four Lawgivers and the British Resident have bound together the constitution and customs of the country and the heritage of Our ancestors of old time, as is related hereunder.
2. Now the Four Lawgivers return to elect Us to be Raja of the Negri Sembilan in accordance with our ancient constitution.
3. Now that We have been installed as Raja of the Negri Sembilan, We, according to the old constitution, cannot interfere in the customs of the country or in Muhammadan Law: and every matter that arises in each State is to be settled in consultation with the British Resident of the Negri Sembilan and is not to be subject to Our commands.
4. If any difference of opinion arises between one Lawgiver and another as to the boundaries of their States, and if

either Lawgiver appeals to Us by presenting himself before Us, then We are bound to interfere and to settle the matter with justice, but if the officers of the Four Lawgivers or their subjects come to present themselves before Us to make complaint or petition Us in writing, We shall not in future entertain their complaints.

5. When the festivals of Hari Raya and Hari Raya Haji are celebrated according to ancient custom, the Four Lawgivers will not come to present themselves before Us at Our Astana, at Sri Menanti, but will each celebrate his own festivals, according to ancient custom, in his own State. Always provided that, on great occasions such as ceremonies of Marriage or Circumcision, if We invite the Four Lawgivers they shall carry out Our wishes in their entirety.

6. In the event of the death of the Yang di per Tuan, the Four Lawgivers shall bring, as an offering, gold in such amount as is befitting, such offering being provided by the Government of the Negri Sembilan.

7. Moreover the Four Lawgivers, in conjunction with each other and with their hereditary officers, shall elect one of the royal princes and instal him as Yang di per Tuan in the same manner and in accordance with the customs and constitution under which the former Yang di per Tuan was installed.

#### BE IT SO.

Written on the 29th day of April, 1898, that is on the 8th day of Zil-haijah, 1315.

The date fixed for the ceremony was Saturday, the 7th of May, 1898. The procedure to be followed in summoning the four Lawgivers to Sri Menanti was adopted as closely as time permitted.

We had to take it for granted that the Tungku Besar had sent for the Dato' Ulu Muar, Dato' Terâchi, Dato' Jempol and Dato' Gunong Pasir, and had announced to them that a Yam Tuan was about to be placed upon the throne.

We assumed the consent of the Dato' Ulu Muar and despatched his four chief Lembaga to convey the news to the four Lawgivers and call upon them to attend at Sri Menanti.

The To' Paduka Besar (Lembaga, Ulu Muar) went to the Raja di Muda (Lembaga, Terâchi) and with him proceeded to Pantai and Rasah to wait upon the Dato' Klana Petra and Dato' Bandar of Sungai Ujong, respectively. Those two Chiefs, with all their following, returned with the two heralds to Terâchi, which, according to ancient customs, is there restingplace.

The To' Sri Maharaja (Lembaga, Ulu Muar) went to the To' Andika (a retainer of Johol) at Cheriau and with him proceeded to wait upon the Dato' Johol Johan Pahlawan Lela Perkasa Setiawan. The aged Dato', who much wished to attend and who had requisitioned the District Officer for a pony and trap in order to do so, was ill and therefore sent the Dato' Baginda Tan Amas, who is his representative in the Council of State. He and his following, which included the Dato' Inas and all his Lembaga, instead of returning with the two heralds to Cheriau, their appointed resting place, came straight on to Kuala Pilah and proceeded the next day to Sri Menanti.

The To' Senara Muda (Lembaga, Ulu Muar) went to the To' Paduka Sri Maharaja (Lembaga, Gunong Pasir) and proceeded with him to the house of Sinda Maharaja (Lembaga, Rembau). After being informed of their business the Sinda Maharaja conducted them to the Dato' Rembau Sedia Raja. He, with all his following, was escorted by the two heralds to Gunong Pasir, which is set apart on State occasions as his resting place.

The To' Orang Kaya Bongsu (Lembaga, Ulu Muar) went to To' Lela Raja (Lembaga, Jempol) and requested him to summon the Dato' Jelebu according to ancient custom. Having given this message the Orang Kaya Bongsu proceeded to Sri Menanti and remained in attendance upon the Dato' Ulu Muar. The To' Lela Raja (Lembaga, Jempol) instructed Si Alang Puteh of Jempol to summon the Dato' Jelebu. He

with all his following, should have returned with the herald to Kampong Bukit, his recognised resting place, but proceeded instead *via* Seremban to Terâchi, where he joined the procession of the Sungai Ujong Chiefs.

To all other Raja, Waris Chiefs, Lembaga, Penghulu and Malays of good position throughout the States news of the approaching ceremony was duly sent.

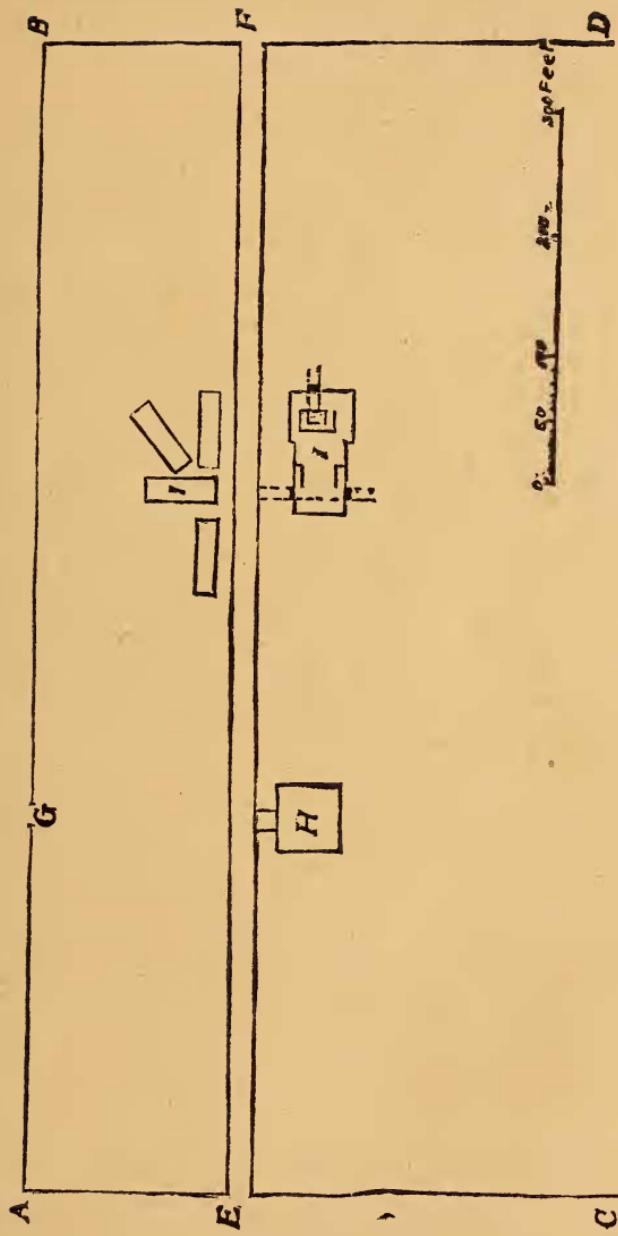
I arrived at the Astana with Mr. Chevallier, the District Officer, Kuala Pilah, at about 10.30 a.m. on Thursday, the 5th of May, and found everything in a state of preparedness that spoke volumes for the trouble taken by the Yam Tuan and his household and by Mr. Chevallier. Mr. Bathurst, Mr. Parr and Mr. Hatchell arrived on Thursday evening. I selected these four gentlemen to look after the four Lawgivers and their people, and to see that their comfort was attended to. A great measure of the success of the whole pageant is due to the assistance they gave me: and the Yam Tuan expressly thanked them.

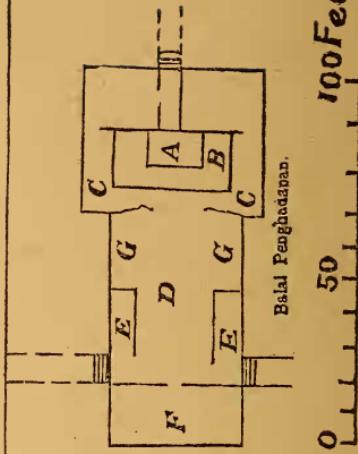
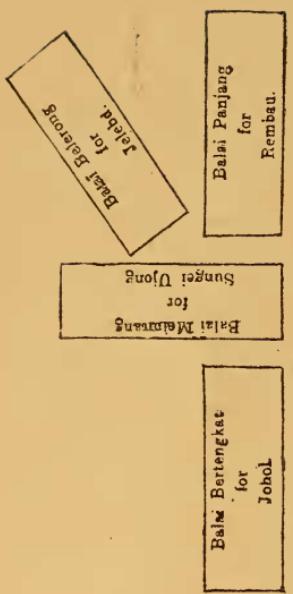
I was told that the Dato' Rembau and the Dato' Johol had already taken up their quarters at Sri Menanti with large followings. We wrote letters to the other three Dato', who were at Terâchi, advising them to stop the night there and come on next day.

It was decided to procure more rice from Seremban, as all the Kuala Pilah shops had been emptied, and we sent for more drapery for the reception-halls of the four Lawgivers, and for four and twenty large Malacca mats to cover the bamboo flooring of those halls.

It may be well to describe the Astana grounds, and the subjoined plans will assist the description:

An examination of the first plan will show that the distance from one entrance gate (E) to the other (F) was about 300 yards. These entrances (*pintu gerbang*) were covered with thatch and on each side there was an earthen platform on which cannon were mounted. The road from one gate to the other was broad and was lined on both sides





with bamboo poles with cross poles, say ten feet from the ground: along the whole length of the road a broad strip of yellow cloth was hung overhead and the entrance paths to the Astana (H) and royal balai (I) were similarly decorated. At the balai the royal yellow standard was flying from an orthodox flagstaff and the general mixture of yellow with the bright green of the grass and foliage was pleasing to the eye.

The second plan sufficiently explains itself.

Friday, the 6th of May, was, unfortunately, appallingly wet; but the rain did not check the constant stream of people that flowed in from every part of the Kuala Pilah district.

About mid-day the Chiefs of Sungai Ujong and Jelebu arrived at Sri Menanti and took up their abode in the houses set apart for them.

The processions of people attending upon the minor Chiefs paraded the Astana grounds, during the brief intervals of sunshine, and helped to make the scene imposing. The party that came with the Dato' Gunong Pasir was strikingly picturesque: his procession was headed by some two hundred women who wore cloths of every conceivable colour, and immediately behind them came his personal attendants carrying spears decorated with the peacock feathers of Gunong Pasir. The Dato' himself walked next, dressed in a suit of striped silk, the preponderating colour being yellow: behind him followed one hundred men, and two hundred children of all ages brought up the rear of the procession.

At various places, outside the Astana grounds, the usual forms of amusement that are concomitant with every Malay gathering of importance were provided: I was specially struck with the many skilful exhibitions of boxing (silat), which never failed to draw large crowds and provoke much merriment.

On two afternoons football matches, Europeans and Malays against the Police, were played: on a third athletic sports were held and, though the afternoon was wet, were much enjoyed.

Most of the time on Friday was occupied on determining several nice points of procedure to be adopted in the ceremony of the morrow. The Sri Menanti people were, of course, in favour of introducing many forms which the older men, who had witnessed a previous installation, deemed to be essential. The members of the Yam Tuan's family were anxious to use every form of expression which would proclaim the dominance of his position, and, had it not been for the extreme good sense of His Highness, it would probably have taken three or four days to arrange the procedure.

I had many consultations with the Dato' Bandar of Sungei Ujong, whose attitude throughout was firm but friendly, and I explained to the Yam Tuan that the Chiefs had made considerable concessions, that their patience ought not to be taxed in any way, and that the ceremony should be performed punctually and with as much expedition as possible. His Highness at once replied that his desire was to yield every point of minor importance. These discussions did not end till nearly midnight on Friday, but it was satisfactory to feel assured that every possible danger to the success of the very important event about to be celebrated had been removed.

On Saturday morning, crowds of people began to collect from every quarter: with the exception of an early shower, the weather was propitious. The placing of the royal umbrellas in front of the "balai penghadapan" (the royal hall in which the installation took place) was the signal for an enormous concourse of people to collect at that spot.

At a quarter to eleven, a guard of honour of the Sikh Police was drawn up near the reception halls of the four Lawgivers: the first to arrive was the Dato' Rembau: I received him at the entrance to the "balai panjang" and, after the guard had presented arms to him, we placed his followers in his reception hall and Mr. Parr conducted the Dato' to the Astana to put his signature and chop to the agreement with the Yam Tuan. Almost immediately afterwards, the Dato' Klana and the Dato' Bandar of Sungei Ujong arrived: the guard presented arms to them at the entrance to the "balai

melintang" and after their followers had entered the balai, Mr. Bathurst conducted them to the Astana : meanwhile Dato' Baginda Tan Amas of Johol, followed by all the Datos and minor Chiefs of the Negri Sembilan (old), had arrived : the guard presented arms to the Dato' Baginda at the entrance to the "balai bertengkat" and, after his following had entered the balai Mr. Chevallier conducted him to the Astana : a long wait occurred before the arrival of the Dato' Jelebu : he was received by the guard at the entrance to the "balai belérong. When his followers had entered it, Mr. Hatchell conducted him to the Astana. The affixing of the signature and chops of the Lawgivers to seven copies of the agreement being completed, I signed and placed the State seal upon them and they were then taken upstairs to the Yam Tuan who added his signature and chop. The four Officers named above then conducted the Lawgivers to their reception halls where they awaited their summons to the installation hall : in the meantime the Tungku Prepuan had taken her seat upon the dais to the left of the throne (Singgasana) and several ladies of high degree had been accommodated with seats in the places set apart for them : the yellow cushion, gold boxes, and other insignia of royalty were brought in and placed on the dais : Tungku Muda Chik, Tungku Ngah of Tampin, Rajah Kadir of Lukut, my four officers and I next took our seats in the body of the hall, and everything being ready the heralds announced that the Yam Tuan was coming to the hall : His Highness was preceded by the "orang ampat Astana" and his "orang anam" carrying the weapons of State : immediately behind him were the young Tungku Besar (his brother) and the still younger Tungku Laksamana (his brother-in-law), while a score or so of Rajas completed the procession.

On arrival at the hall, His Highness was received by a guard of honour : he entered the hall and took his seat upon the "Singgasana," the "orang ampat Astana" and the "orang anam" stood upon the right and left below the dais and the Tungku Besar and Tungku Laksamana sat on the right and left of His Highness below the throne. The heralds sum-

moned the Lawgivers and the hereditary Chiefs, who were each conducted from their respective balai to the entrance to the hall by their Officers of State: they entered the hall alone and took their seats in the following order:—

(1) The Dato' Klana	{ Sungei	(7) The Dato' Ulu Muar
(2) The Dato' Bandar	{ Ujong	(8) The Dato' Terâchi
(3) The Dato' Jelebu		(9) The Dato' Jempol
(4) Dato' Baginda of Johol		(10) The Dato' Gunong Pasir
(5) The Dato' Rembau		(11) The Dato' Inas
(6) The Tungku Besar of	Tampin	(12) The Dato' Gemencheh
		(13) The Dato' Muda Linggi

The two heralds (Bentara Kanan and Bentara Kiri) took up their positions on the right and left of the Yam Tuan.

When all were in readiness the young Dato' Klana, rising, said, "Oh, Bentara, proclaim to everyone that we the four Lawgivers have assembled here to place the Yang di per Tuan Tungku Muhammad upon the throne of Negri Sembilan."

The Bentara Kanan thereupon, standing on one leg, with the sole of his right foot resting on his left knee, holding his right ear open with his right hand and shading his eyes with his left hand, made proclamation as follows:—

"Oh, gentlemen all, illustrious and humble, great and small, old and young, by order of the four Lawgivers, Tungku Muhammad, the son of the late Yam Tuan Tungku Antah, is proclaimed as Yang di per Tuan of the Negri Sembilan."

The people signified their homage by shouting three times, "Dôlat Tuanku."

I then addressed the Yam Tuan as follows:—

"I am very pleased that the Lawgivers and Lembaga and Officers and all the people from all parts of the Negri Sembilan have unanimously installed Your Highness as Yang di per Tuan and have re-established their ancient constitution, and that Your Highness has assented to their action. Now I will convey their wishes to the Resident-General."

The Bentara Kanan proceeded to call, by means of the following formula, upon each of the Lawgivers and on the